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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VILNIUS 000279

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR (DKRAMER), EUR/NB, AND EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [RS](#) [UP](#) [BO](#) [KZ](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: EUR DAS KRAMER AND EU REPS COORDINATE BELARUS
POLICY

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Alexander Titolo for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: EUR DAS David Kramer participated in an informal meeting on Belarus with EU officials and representatives from EU capitals March 14 in Vilnius. The participants agreed that the USG and the EU will coordinate their statements and actions in the immediate post-election period. EU officials welcomed Kramer's message that all must maintain a commitment to democracy and civil society in Belarus in the long term, regardless of the outcome of the election. The importance of continuing to engage Russia on Belarus also resonated around the table. Kramer and GOL foreign policy leaders focused on Belarus and on the road ahead in Ukraine in their bilateral discussions. Kramer stressed the importance of urging Ukraine to increase transparency regarding the recent gas deal, to fight corruption, and to remain mindful that NATO is a performance-based institution. END SUMMARY.

USG and EU Coordinate Belarus Policy

2. (C) Representatives from EU countries agreed with DAS Kramer that the Government of Belarus should hear a clear and closely coordinated U.S.-EU message in the immediate post-election period. All EU participants concurred that EU foreign ministers convening on March 20 should issue a joint statement on Belarus in advance of the announcement of findings of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission. French representative Aurelia Bouchez, Head of the MFA's Eastern Europe Directorate, suggested that the statement focus on the regime's actions during the campaign. The statement, she offered, should include the following points:

- the EU is considering further restrictive measures based on the regime's actions during the campaign;
- the EU will continue to support civil society in Belarus;
- close US-EU coordination on Belarus will continue; and
- the EU will seek to continue its dialogue with Russia on Belarus.

This outline received broad support from the attendees.

3. (C) Germany's representative, Ambassador-at-large Norbert Baas, proposed that the EU prepare to issue a series of quick declarations during the vote count. Baas suggested that the March 20 statement come from the EU presidency, with a tough statement from the Council following on March 23 when more details of the election and ODIHR's appraisal of it emerge. Kramer encouraged flexibility, since the situation following election day is likely to be very fluid. The United States and the EU must be prepared to condemn strongly and immediately any acts of violence that the regime in Minsk might perpetrate, he said, and we should be especially wary at this time of sending inadvertent messages by opening up new lines of communication.

Tightening Restrictive Measures

4. (C) The participants agreed that the United States and the EU will likely expand the visa ban to some extent in the aftermath of the elections. Vilmaris Henins, Director of Latvia's First Bilateral Relations Department, whose Embassy in Minsk serves as the representative of the EU presidency in Belarus, said that by the end of March his government will have compiled names for possible inclusion on the visa ban list. Kramer acknowledged a lack of consensus on the number of individuals on whom the USG and the EU should impose travel restrictions. He stressed, however, that the message that emerges from the meeting should be that the United States and EU plan to expand the list and will make the names public after the elections.

5. (C) Kramer stated that the USG is eager to hear its EU partners' thoughts on targeted financial measures against the regime and seizures of assets of its leaders. Some participants said they are wary of economic sanctions, fearing that they could hurt the Belarusian people. Kramer stated that the USG would seek to target the regime with such

actions, and expressed full agreement on the need not to make life more difficult for the people of Belarus.

Reaching Out To Russia

16. (C) British representative Tim Barrow, an Assistant Director in the FCO, stated that the USG and the EU should engage Russia on Belarus now to forestall finding ourselves on opposite sides later. Kramer agreed, and said that the USG will reach out to Russian interlocutors in the final days before the elections. Lithuanian Political Director Zygimantas Pavilionis and Ambassador Baas of Germany asked if the EU presidency could send a message to the Russian government, but Austrian Ambassador to Lithuania Michael Schwarzingger, representing the EU presidency, declined to commit his Chancellor. Helga Schmid, Director of the Policy Unit of the EU Council Secretariat, opined that the EU should initially issue a message at a lower level, keeping the Chancellor and High Representative Solana in reserve, should there be a need to elevate the dialogue later.

Long-term Support for Civil Society

17. (C) Pavilionis of Lithuania called for the EU to increase support for civil society in Belarus and to find more effective mechanisms within the EU to deliver such support. Participants agreed on the importance of maintaining a long-term commitment to democracy-building in Belarus, regardless of the outcome of the elections. Schmid of the EC said that isolating the people of Belarus will not work and agreed on the need to deepen engagement with civil society. Ambassador Baas of Germany advised caution in drawing up a visa ban list, emphasizing the need to keep avenues of outreach to the people in Belarus open. Kramer affirmed the USG's commitment to supporting the forces of democracy in Belarus over the long term while eschewing contact with high-level Belarusian officials.

GOL Support for Democracy in Belarus

18. (C) Kramer thanked MFA Undersecretary Albinas Januska, in a March 15 bilateral meeting, for the GOL's strong efforts to promote democracy in the region. Januska lamented that the assistance that the democratic forces in Belarus have received has not been enough. He noted that the GOL is scrambling to find funding for last-minute election day activities. He warned of his growing conviction that many of the groups that the GOL, the USG, and others have funded are fronts for the Belarusian government, and lamented that they have successfully diverted contributions away from their intended goals. Januska said that the GOL has assembled a small group of reliable pro-democracy youth from the region, including Russia, who can offer experience to Belarusian counterparts. (In Kramer's March 14 meeting with the EU representatives, the MFA's Renatas Juska advocated engaging Ukrainians and Moldovans, who can enter Belarus without visas, to help track how civil society groups spend western assistance money.)

Energy Security

19. (C) Januska said that Russia's use of its vast energy resources for political purposes posed a serious problem for Lithuania. He said that the Kremlin will obstruct any deal that would award Lithuania's Mazeiku-Nafta oil refinery to Kazakhstan's Kazmunay Gas. (Kazmunay is currently the high bidder for Yukos's majority stake in Mazeikiu Nafta.) Januska said that despite several promises from Kazakh President Nazarbayev to convince Russian Federation President Putin to support the deal, Russia has indicated it will not let Kazakh oil transit Russian pipelines for refinement in Lithuania. Kramer assured Januska that, while we are working closely with Russia on several key issues, most notably Iran, the USG will not turn a blind eye to Russia's pressuring Europe on energy matters. Kramer spoke of the USG desire for solidarity with the EU on energy security and on the need to explore ways to break Russia's energy grip on Europe and open up alternative routes to Central Asian oil and gas that do not pass through Russia.

Ukraine

10. (C) Kramer met on March 15 with Valteris Baliukonis, diplomatic advisor to Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, who had accompanied his president to Kiev four days earlier. Kramer affirmed that the USG will work with whatever

government emerges from the March 26 Rada elections. Baliukonis agreed with Kramer's assessment that the elections are shaping up to be free and fair, noting that the gulf between Tymoshenko and Yushchenko, however, seems as wide as ever. He said he did not rule out a Yushchenko-Yanukovich block emerging after the elections. Baliukonis said that Yushchenko had told President Adamkus during the latter's visit to Kiev that the next prime minister will come from the party that wins the greatest share of the vote.

11. (C) Kramer reviewed Ukraine's significant achievements over the last year and stressed that that the country cannot afford to waste months post-election fighting over the composition of the new government. Ukraine will need to make domestic reforms, he said, if it wants to receive a Membership Action Plan from NATO in 2006. He remarked that the USG and EU must hold the Ukrainian government accountable to its pledge to fight corruption and to review the recent gas deal as soon as the election dust settles. It will be necessary, Kramer advised, to remind the Ukrainians continually that NATO is a performance-based institution. Baliukonis agreed, and offered that there is still much work to do to convince the Ukrainian people that NATO is not the enemy.

Comment

12. (C) GOL policymakers are keen to play a leading role in averting reversals for regional democracy in the back-to-back elections in Belarus and Ukraine, and they want USG help. They also want our help dealing with Russia. Kramer's assurances that the USG will not leave Europe dangling while the Kremlin toys with their energy supplies will mollify some fears. Many Lithuanians, however, will continue to harbor a concern that the USG's need to engage the Kremlin on strategic issues such as Iran will restrain our activism in what Moscow considers to be its backyard.

13. (U) DAS Kramer did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before departing Vilnius.
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